DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 109 424 CE 004 269

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TITLE The Development of Guidelines for Recruitment Programs in Agricultural Education.
INSTITUTION Ohio State Univ., Columbus. Dept. of Agricultural Education.
PUB DATE [74]
NOTE 15p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Agricultural Education; *Developmental Programs; *Guidelines; Higher Education; Questionnaires; Research Methodology; School Surveys; Secondary Education; Teacher Education; *Teacher Recruitment; Teacher Shortage; *Teacher Supply and Demand; *Vocational Agriculture Teachers

ABSTRACT

The shortage of teachers in vocational agriculture and the growing number of programs and students in vocational agriculture indicate the necessity of improved agricultural education recruitment programs. The major purpose of this study was to develop guidelines for teacher recruitment programs for use by university and State Departments of Agricultural Education throughout the country. The scope of the study examined methods of recruitment, their influence on students, student and educator opinions, and sources from which to recruit. Mail questionnaires were developed to collect data from head State supervisors of agricultural education, teacher educators of agricultural education, and students enrolled in agricultural education. Fifty State supervisor returns from the 50 States, 78 returns (95.1 percent) from teacher education departments, and 373 returns from students were received. The findings are summarized. Conclusions emphasized the teacher shortage and the importance of adequate vocational counseling and information in high school and college. Guidelines stressed the development and coordination of a recruiting program to assess all sources of recruitment. Recommendations called for studies to determine the most effective recruitment practices. (Author/JB)

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF GUIDELINES FOR RECRUITMENT PROGRAMS IN AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

Vernon D. Luft and Ralph E. Bender

INTRODUCTION

Vocational agriculture as a part of vocational-technical education cannot meet program demands if the profession does not replenish its teaching corps through active recruitment. Recruiting is the first step in alleviating the chronic shortage of vocational agriculture teachers.

Although a surplus of teachers of the "academic education" subjects exists, the opposite is true in vocational education. Smith (1971, p. 6) reported the need for a 300 percent increase in vocational education teachers from 1965 to 1975. A shortage of teachers has also limited development of programs of vocational education in agriculture. In a national study to determine the supply and demand for teachers of vocational agriculture in 1971, Woodin (1971, p. 1 & 2) indicated:

> "A record breaking 1,743 were qualified for teaching vocational agriculture in 1971, the largest number qualified in any of the past seven years. At the same time that the number of persons qualified increased, the number entering teaching decreased.

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> This decrease ranged from 64% entering the profession in 1965 to only 49.6% in 1971. A turnover of 9.7% also contributed to the teacher shortage."

The change from vocational agriculture programs in production agriculture to specialized programs preparing students for off-farm agricultural occupations has increased the demand for vocational agriculture teachers. Smith (1971, p. 6) reported the anticipated enrollment in vocational agriculture would almost double from 1960 to 1975. The increased enrollments required large increases in numbers of teachers entering the profession.

When considering the increased need for teachers of vocational agriculture due to rising enrollments and the increase in specialized programs, it becomes quite apparent that recruiting will continue to be a problem of great concern to people in the agricultural education profession. Rogers (1966, p. 14) emphasized this concern when he stated:

> "I believe that there can be no question about the fact that the day of the generalist vocational educators is about over. Increasingly, more specialized teaching personnel will be demanded in all occupational areas. To provide such personnel, however, will place upon the occupational education establishment tremendous pressure to procure or recruit and train those needed in these many specialty areas."

The growth of vocational education in agriculture will depend largely on the ability to supply necessary teachers. Without additional teachers, vocational programs cannot expand and improve. Venn (1964, p. 151) stated:

> "One of the greatest handicaps to the improvement and expansion of vocational and technical education is the desperate shortage of qualified teachers and administrators."

Miller (1967, p. 11) indicated that one of the major administrative tasks in program implementation is the selection and recruitment of teachers. Feirer (1962, p. 2) saw teacher recruitment as the most crucial problem to be faced in education in the next few years.

Smith (1971, p. 6) expressed his concern for the severity of personnel needs in vocational agriculture. He stated:

> "Professional staff development is one of the most important problems confronting vocational education in this decade. The teacher supply and demand problem in vocational agriculture has become so acute that it is no longer one that can be solved by teacher educators alone... The failure to satisfy this need for professional personnel will result in the failure to meet the educational needs of rural youth, the closing of departments, and a reduction in prestige of vocational agriculture as a professional field of service."

Miller (1967, p. 24) revealed that research was needed "To determine factors that may be observed in planning teacher recruiting programs aimed at business, industry and the profession." Todd and Woodin (1966, p. 9) stated:

> "Ideally, in a profession, the training program should be preceded by effective recruiting, selecting, and admitting of prospective teachers."

The shortage of teachers in vocational agriculture and the growing number of programs and students in vocational agriculture would indicate the necessity of improved agricultural education recruitment programs. People charged with the task of fulfilling the demands for teachers of vocational agriculture, namely teacher educators and state supervisors of agricultural education, should be concerned about the problems of recruiting. At the same time, it would be most beneficial to teacher educators and state supervisors to share the recruiting ideas, techniques, methods, and programs unique to their specific departments. The shared ideas might then be developed into guidelines for a successful recruiting program; and made available to Agricultural Education Departments and State Departments needing ideas to aid them in their recruiting efforts.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

Teacher educators and state supervisors of agricultural education are primarily charged with the responsibility for teacher recruitment. Active programs of recruitment should be developed to meet the demands for teachers of vocational agriculture.

The major purpose of this study was to develop guidelines for teacher recruitment programs for use by University and State Departments of Agricultural Education in the United States.

Answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What methods of recruiting prospective teachers of vocational agriculture are used by teacher educators and state supervisors and how successful do they rate the recruitment methods?

2. To what extent do recruitment practices and other factors influence university students enrolled in agricultural education in their choice of curriculum?

3. How do the recruitment practices believed by teacher educators and state supervisors in agricultural education to be most successful compare with the practices believed by agricultural education students to be most successful?

4. What sources do teacher educators and state supervisors of agricultural education feel are available from which to recruit prospective agriculture teachers and to what extent are prospective teachers recruited from each of the sources?

DATA COLLECTION

Mail questionnaires were developed to collect data from head state supervisors of agricultural education, teacher educators of agricultural education, and students enrolled in agricultural education. The questionnaires were sent to each head state supervisor, to the chairman of each agricultural education teacher education department, and to 40 agricultural education departments selected through a stratified random sampling procedure. The questionnaires were administered by each of the 40 departments to their agricultural education students.

Fifty state supervisor returns representing all 50 states, 78 returns representing 95.1 percent of the teacher education departments, and 373 returns from students representing 32 or 80 percent of the departments were received.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The major findings of the study are as follows:

Background of Students

1. Over 44 percent of the student respondents were senior agricultural education students; 28 percent were juniors.

2. A total of 37 percent of the students had studied vocational agriculture in high school for four years; 27 percent had not studied vocational agriculture.

3. A total of 32 percent of the students had been FFA members for four years, 30 percent were never members, and 13 percent were members longer than five years.

4. Over 80 percent of the students had a farm background while 19.57 percent had a non-farm background.

5. A total of 39 percent of the students attended a post-secondary vocational-technical school, community, or junior college before enrolling in the university.

6. Occupational information concerning agricultural education was reported available to 59 percent of the students in their high school. Of the 59 percent reporting the information available, 66 percent of the students said they used the information.

7. A total of 94 percent of the students indicated they expect to graduate with an agricultural education major.

Present Supply of Vocational Agriculture Teachers

Thirty-six state supervisors indicated their state had an inadequate supply of vocational agriculture teachers.

Responsibility for Recruitment in Agricultural Education

1. Sixty percent of the state supervisors reported that teacher recruitment in agricultural education was the responsibility of state supervisors, teacher educators, and vocational agriculture teachers.

2. Thirty-eight percent of the teacher educators indicated teacher recruitment was the responsibility of teacher educators; 37 percent said it was the responsibility of state supervisors, teacher educators, and vocational agriculture teachers.

3. Seventy-four percent of the state supervisors reported they had no one on their staff assigned the responsibility of recruiting; 70 percent of the teacher educators reported they had someone assigned recruiting responsibilities.

Recruiting Practices Employed by State Supervisors and Teacher Educators

1. State supervisors of agricultural education indicated the recruiting practices most often used were (in order) a personal interview with an agricultural education professor, tours of the university and agricultural education department, a teaching unit on opportunities in agricultural education, displays and bulletin boards, and recruiting brochures and pamphlets. The news media was reported to be the least used practice.

2. Teacher educators of agricultural education indicated the recruiting practices most often used were (in order) recruiting brochures and pamphlets, personal interview with an agricultural education professor, group presentations, and tours of the university and agricultural education department. Teacher educators reported the news media as the least used practice.

High School Subject Influencing Agricultural Education Students' Choice of Major

1. Over 63 percent of the students indicated that vocational agriculture was the one high school subject that influenced their choice of college major.

2. Twenty-six percent of the students reported there was not a high school subject that influenced their choice of college major.

Time in Life in Which University Students Choose Agricultural Education as Their Major

1. Fifty-four percent of the state supervisors felt that students choose agricultural education as a college major while in high school, 22 percent felt the choice was made when students are college sophomores.

2. Over 44 percent of the teacher educators felt that students choose agricultural education while in high school and 19 percent felt it was when students were college sophomores.

3. A total of 25 percent of the students said they chose agricultural education for a college major while they were in high school, 19 percent as a college sophomore, and 18 percent as a college freshman.

People Influencing Students' Choice of College Curriculum

1. State supervisors felt the people having an influence of students' choice of college curriculum were (in order) vocational agriculture teachers, parents, friends, state supervisors, and relatives. The county agent was ranked to have the least influence.

2. Teacher educators felt the people having an influence on students' choice of college curriculum were vocational agriculture teachers, parents and friends, college professors, and teachers other than vocational agriculture.

3. Agricultural education students reported the people most influential to their choice of college curriculum were (in order) vocational agriculture teachers, parents, college professors, friends, and relatives. The state supervisor of agricultural education was reported to have the least influence on their choice of curriculum.

Factors Influencing Students' Choice of College Curriculum

1. The factors that state supervisors felt influenced students' choice of college curriculum were (in order) experience in FFA, vocational agriculture courses, employment experiences, and visits to the university campus. High school courses other than vocational agriculture were the least influential factor as reported by supervisors.

2. Teacher educators felt the factors influencing college students curriculum choice were (in order) experience in FFA, vocational agriculture courses, visits to the university campus, and employment experience.

3. A ranking of the factors that students reported to influence their choice of college curriculum were vocational agriculture courses, employment experiences, experiences in FFA, publications dealing with careers in agricultural education, and publications dealing with

agricultural education curriculum. Students ranked high school courses other than vocational agriculture as the least influential factor.

Influence of Recruiting Practices in Recruiting Prospective Vocational Agriculture Teachers

1. State supervisors felt the recruiting practices that would have an influencing effect in recruiting prospective vocational agriculture teachers were a personal interview with an agricultural education professor, teaching units on opportunities in agricultural education, group presentations, and personal letters from an agricultural education professor. Supervisors ranked form letters sent out to many people as the least influential recruiting practice.

2. Teacher educators ranked a personal interview with an agricultural education professor as the most influential recruiting practice, followed by personal letters from an agricultural education professor, group presentations, and recruiting brochures and pamphlets. The least influential practice was the news media according to teacher educators.

3. Students ranked a personal interview with an agricultural education professor, teaching units on opportunities in agricultural education, tours of the university and agricultural education department, and recruiting brochures and pamphlets as the recruiting practices most influential to recruit prospective vocational agriculture teachers. Students ranked form letters sent out to many people last.

Sources From Which to Recruit Prospective Agriculture Teachers

1. State supervisors indicated the best source from which to recruit prospective agriculture teachers is from business and industry degreed people, followed by technical education graduates, business and industry non-degreed people, and university graduates other than agricultural education.

2. Teacher educators reported the best source from which to recruit prospective agriculture teachers is from university graduates other than agricultural education, technical education graduates, business and industry degreed people, and business and industry non-degreed people.

3. Both supervisors and teacher educators rated the military service as the least likely source from which to recruit prospective vocational agriculture teachers.

4. A total of 120 vocational agriculture teachers were recruited from the source "university graduates other than agricultural education" for the 1971-72 school year; 83 were recruited from business and industry people without degrees; and 76 from business and industry people with degrees.

CONCLUSIONS

In light of the foregoing data, the following conclusions have been drawn:

1. Most of the university agricultural education students had formerly studied vocational agriculture in high school, been members of the FFA, and had a farm background.

2. A large majority of students used occupational information concerning agricultural education if it was available to them in their high schools.

3. An inadequate supply of vocational agriculture teachers was a problem facing many states.

4. Recruitment in agricultural education was a responsibility of teacher educators, state supervisors, and vocational agriculture teachers.

5. Most state supervisory staffs did not have individuals assigned the responsibility of recruiting.

6. Vocational agriculture courses at the secondary level influenced enrollees to major in agricultural education in the university.

7. There was no single time when students choose agricultural education for a college major, but the choice was made at varying times.

8. People that had an influence on agricultural education students' choice of college major were vocational agriculture teachers, parents, college professors, friends and relatives.

9. Vocational agriculture courses, employment experiences, experiences in FFA, and publications dealing with careers in agricultural education were the factors that influenced agricultural education students' choice of college curriculum.

10. Recruiting practices that had the most influence on agricultural education students' choice of college major included personal interviews with an agricultural education professor, teaching units on opportunities in agricultural education, tours of universities and agricultural education departments, recruiting brochures and pamphlets.

11. The most likely sources other than agricultural education graduates from which to recruit prospective vocational agriculture teachers were university graduates other than agricultural education, business and industry, and technical education graduates.

GUIDELINES

The following guidelines have been formulated by the writer and validated from data contained in this study.

1. Develop and coordinate a recruiting program within the policies and philosophies of teacher educators and state supervisors in the state.

2. Make efforts for supervisors and/or teacher educators to interview prospective agriculture teacher candidates whenever possible. This should include high school vocational agriculture students; agriculture students in post-secondary vocational-technical schools, community and junior colleges, and university college of agriculture students who do not have a declared major.

3. Teacher educators and/or supervisors should develop and provide a teaching unit on opportunities in agricultural education for use by local vocational agriculture teachers; and for agriculture instructors in vocational-technical schools, and community and junior colleges.

4. Encourage prospective candidates to tour the university campus and agricultural education department facilities.

5. Impress upon vocational agriculture instructors that they are the most influential person in encouraging students to choose agricultural education for their college major.

6. Encourage vocational agriculture instructors to recruit good students for the high school vocational agriculture program. This would be a prerequisite to the vocational agriculture courses influencing students' choice of agricultural education as a college major.

7. Recruit vocational agriculture students into membership in the FFA inasmuch as their experience in FFA will be an influencing factor.

8. Rely primarily on vocational agriculture courses as the high school subject influencing a student's choice of agricultural education.

9. Use form letters and the news media only as a last resort and when other recruiting practices have not produced needed results.

10. Provide occupational information concerning agricultural education to all high schools when feasible. Otherwise the information may best be utilized by distributing it to vocational agriculture departments.

11. Distribute literature concerning agricultural education to parents of prospective candidates.

12. Provide literature concerning agricultural education to vocational-technical schools, community colleges, and junior colleges that have technical agriculture programs.

13. Make efforts to recruit students from vocational-technical schools, community colleges, and junior colleges.

14. Develop a recruiting program that will provide contacts with prospective candidates at various times in their lives.

15. Evaluate all possible sources from which agriculture teachers can be recruited in the state.

16. Assign an individual or individuals on agricultural education teacher education and state staffs the responsibility of recruiting.

17. Employ students that have indicated an interest in becoming a vocational agriculture teacher as teacher's aides, lab assistants, or tutors inasmuch as students

reported employment experiences as a factor having a great deal of influence on their choice of college curriculum.

18. Establish a recruitment committee in every state that can continuously evaluate the recruiting practices employed by their state.

19. Use research data as a basis for developing recruiting programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations for further study are based on the researcher's findings and on the knowledge gained in conducting this study. It is recommended that:

1. A similar study be conducted using vocational agriculture teachers and/or agricultural education students recruited from business and industry as the target populations to determine what influenced their decision to enter the field of agricultural education.

2. Every state conduct a study to obtain data that can be used when developing recruiting programs.

3. A similar study be conducted utilizing an interview procedure as the means of collecting data from students allowing the researcher to probe and obtain more specific data.

4. A study be conducted to determine what influences university agricultural education graduates to teach vocational agriculture instead of accepting positions in other agricultural occupations.

5. A study be conducted to determine what causes vocational agriculture teachers to exit from the profession and what can be done to retain these teachers.

6. A study be conducted to ascertain whether it is the recruitment practices that fail or if it is the conditions of the vocational agriculture teaching position that causes a shortage of vocational agriculture teachers.

7. This study be repeated periodically so guidelines can be kept up-to-date along with the changing society.

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SUMMARY OF RESEARCH SERIES

The lack of sufficient numbers of teachers of vocational agriculture is a serious problem. The problem has several dimensions. Too few are prepared. Of those prepared, some enter other professions. Those who enter often leave within a few years for advancement in related endeavors. In this study, the authors specifically examine practices designed to encourage more students to prepare themselves as teachers of vocational agriculture. The problem is stated, the procedures are described, findings and conclusions are reported, guidelines for further recruitment efforts are presented and recommendations for further research are listed.

This summary is based on a doctoral dissertation completed by Vernon D. Luft under the direction of Ralph E. Bender. Dr. Luft is currently serving as State Supervisor of Vocational Agriculture for Montana. Dr. Bender is Chairman, Department of Agricultural Education, The Ohio State University. The authors are recognized for their scholarship in preparing this summary. Special appreciation is also due Ralph J. Woodin, Professor Emeritus, The Ohio State University and Robert P. Price, Chairman, Department of Agricultural Education, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater for their critical review of this manuscript prior to its acceptance for publication.

Research has been an important function of the Department of Agricultural Education since it was established in 1917. Research conducted by the Department has generally been in the form of graduate theses, staff studies and funded research. It is the purpose of this series to make useful knowledge from such research available to practitioners in the profession. Individuals desiring additional information on this topic should examine the references cited in the bibliography.

J. David McCracken,
Series Coordinator

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